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New York

President:	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu/Mr. Yao Shaojun	(China)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mrs. Cordova Soria
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
	Equatorial Guinea	Mrs. Mele Colifa
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Temenov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Mr. Cohen

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of South Sudan to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; His Excellency Mr. Smaïl Chergui, African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security; and Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women.

Mr. Chergui is joining today's meeting via video tele-conference from Addis Ababa.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lacroix.

Mr. Lacroix: I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the joint African Union-United Nations high-level visit to South Sudan, which we undertook from 7 to 9 October. That was the first joint visit that also included UN-Women and focused on strengthening the partnership between our two institutions to achieve inclusive and gender-responsive peace and security in South Sudan. The African Union (AU) was represented by its Commissioner for Peace and Security, my friend and colleague Ambassador Smaïl Chergui; former Vice-President of Uganda, member of the Panel of the Wise and co-Chair of the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation, or FemWise-Africa, Dr. Specioza Kazibwe; and the Executive Director of UN-Women, my colleague Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka. I represented the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

As the Council knows, the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan had just been signed on 12 September, and while it is pivotal to the peace process, scepticism about its ability to deliver a sustainable peace this time around remains a concern. Our objective was to express support for the revitalized peace agreement and to encourage its full and timely implementation, while emphasizing the importance of the representation and meaningful participation of women in the peace process and the need for the Government to ensure a protective environment for civilians, in particular women and girls.

I wish to again commend the mediation efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which was supported by the African Union and international partners and was critical in securing the revitalized agreement. The agreement provides a road map for an inclusive political settlement of the conflict, but its signature is only the first step in a process that still has many challenges ahead. The pre-transitional period is critical and will require the South Sudanese leaders to assume their responsibilities and pave the way for the full implementation of the agreement. Honouring the provisions for women, in particular the guarantee of their 35 per cent representation across the executive arm, the IGAD Council of Ministers and the pre-transitional institutions will be of particular importance to achieving an inclusive and durable peace.

Our consultations in the country were telling in that regard. While hopeful, the confidence of the women we spoke to in Bentiu — both from the town and the protection-of-civilians site — was low. They noted that, despite the agreement, their families were still falling victim to the violence. They stressed that this is not their war. They appealed to us and their leaders not to forget them, to create a protective environment and to ensure that women are included as key actors in the full implementation of the agreement. The women representatives from civil society and the Government in Juba echoed similar sentiments and stressed the need to respect the cessation of hostilities and to prioritize women's engagement in monitoring the quota implementation. They also called on the African Union and the United Nations to use all avenues to encourage their leaders to implement the agreement. It is imperative that women be represented in the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism, the Strategic Defence and Security Review Board and the transitional justice and reconciliation mechanisms, as stipulated in the agreement. At the

local level, mechanisms enabling their voices to be heard would also be critical.

Turning to developments in South Sudan, although slow, the parties are taking initial steps towards the implementation of the agreement. Since our visit on 15 October, the transitional national legislature has ratified the revitalized agreement, paving the way for its incorporation into the Transitional Constitution. On 21 October, the National Pre-Transitional Committee held its first meeting to begin coordinating activities for the pre-transitional period. The participation of Mr. Riek Machar and other opposition leaders in the peace celebrations on 31 October in Juba, President Kiir's apology to the people of South Sudan for the immense suffering exacted by the conflict, and the release of political prisoners — including two high-profile political opposition detainees — are all positive gestures towards confidence-building and reconciliation.

During the peace celebrations, President Kiir and Riek Machar had a face-to-face meeting that served as a confidence-building event in itself and paved the way for the National Pre-Transitional Committee and the reconstituted National Constitutional Amendment Committee to hold meetings in Juba. To that end, on 5 November the National Constitutional Amendment Committee drafted a constitutional amendment bill, incorporating the agreement into the 2011 Transitional Constitution of South Sudan. In addition, the National Pre-Transitional Committee convened its second meeting on 7 November.

We have also observed some specific localized confidence-building measures in recent weeks between the South Sudan People's Defence Forces — formerly the Sudan People's Liberation Army — and the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition (SPLA-IO), indicating some efforts to open lines of communication. The first was a meeting between the two sides in Pagak, Upper Nile, in October, at which the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and SPLA-IO negotiated free movement in the town. Over the past two weeks, there have been reports of similar discussions in multiple locations across Unity, Jonglei, Western Bahr el-Ghazal, Eastern Equatoria and Central Equatoria. We are hopeful that those initial signs of goodwill are a demonstration of a stronger commitment to the current process than that which was seen in 2015.

Notwithstanding those developments, I must continue to stress that there can be no viable or sustainable peace unless the parties adhere to a permanent ceasefire, silence the guns, disengage forces and include women as key players. While significantly reduced, there are still continued reports of fighting between the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and opposition forces, and between the SPLA-IO and various break-away factions of the opposition groups in Central Equatoria. Sporadic clashes have also occurred between the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and SPLA-IO in various areas of southern Unity, and road ambushes and attacks between the two groups have continued in the Baggari area of Western Bahr el-Ghazal.

Those incidents, together with the continuing intercommunal violence in parts of Jonglei and Lakes, continue to take a toll on civilians and exacerbate displacement and humanitarian needs. Reports of recruitment, including of children, by the parties in several parts of the country also betray our confidence in the parties to implement the agreement in full. The country's leaders and the parties will have to demonstrate their genuine commitment to making difficult decisions and compromises for its effective implementation. In that respect, I cannot overemphasize the crucial role of the Security Council, the African Union, IGAD and the region to continue to hold the parties accountable and ensure that they abide by their obligations under the Agreement. It is clear that the solution to the conflict in South Sudan can only be political and not through military action.

The United Nations stands ready as a continued partner of peace in supporting South Sudan. The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) will continue to provide support, performing tasks within the bounds of its mandate. With respect to any possible evolution of the UNMISS mandate, including the Regional Protection Force, it will ultimately be for the Security Council to decide. However, the following principles would need to be applied: first, a continuing priority of the protection of civilians in the mandated tasks of UNMISS; secondly, the need to preserve a single peacekeeping force with one unified command and control structure; and thirdly, that any addition to the force would have to be carried out consistent with the principles of peacekeeping and the standards to which we hold all troop- and police-contributing countries.

We encouraged the parties, as well as IGAD, to engage with us and with Security Council members on these matters. In this vein, during the IGAD chiefs

of defence staff/forces meeting held on 22 October in Khartoum, they mandated an assessment team to explore the possible addition of contingents from countries in the region to the Regional Protection Force. We understand that the assessment team concluded its one-week visit to South Sudan on 10 November.

Consolidating this hard-won peace will be our foremost challenge in the weeks and months ahead, and time will be our greatest enemy. We are all too familiar with the consequences of delayed implementation timelines or realization of peace dividends for the people of South Sudan, who have suffered for far too long.

During our visit, our advice to the authorities was to concretely demonstrate, without delay, their commitment to working together with all stakeholders to develop a detailed plan of action to implement the various aspects of the agreement, including security. A demonstration of such commitment would encourage international partners to play their role. In this regard, we stand ready to engage with the African Union, IGAD and our subregional partners, including with the AU-led African Women Leaders Network and FemWise, to continue to support the implementation of an inclusive and durable peace in South Sudan.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Lacroix for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Chergui.

Mr. Chergui: Mr. President, I, too, wish to thank you for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the joint African Union and United Nations high-level visit to South Sudan, which we undertook from 7 to 9 October. As my colleague and friend Jean-Pierre Lacroix indicated, this was the first joint visit that also included UN-Women as well as the African Union Panel of the Wise and FemWise. Indeed, this mission underscored our resolve to strengthen our institutional partnership aimed at achieving an equitable peace in South Sudan.

I wish to inform the Council that our joint mission provided a similar briefing to the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council at its 800th meeting, held here in Addis Ababa on 10 October. The Peace and Security Council commended President Salva Kiir Mayardit and the other South Sudanese parties for the signing of the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, on 12 September. It also recognized that this remains the only viable option for addressing the current political, social, economic and security challenges facing South Sudan and for ensuring lasting peace.

As the Council is aware, the African Union and the United Nations signed the revitalized Agreement as guarantors, which in itself comes with major responsibilities. Therefore, it was only logical to undertake this visit early enough to express support for the revitalized peace Agreement while encouraging the parties to faithfully implement it. The African Union Commission believes that the Agreement offers the South Sudanese a unique window of opportunity to deliver an inclusive, lasting and just peace.

However, as my colleague mentioned, both the AU and the United Nations are very much aware of the scepticism surrounding the ability of the parties to deliver on their commitments. As a result, some international partners are yet to sign as guarantors. However, as the African Union and the United Nations, we felt duty-bound to engage the Government of South Sudan, at the highest levels possible, and emphasize the need for the full implementation of the Agreement and the importance of women's representation in the peace process.

I should like at this point to commend the efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), especially the leadership of the Sudan, Uganda and Ethiopia in delivering this peace Agreement. The African Union shares the view that the responsibility to fully implement the Agreement now rests with the South Sudanese parties. Therefore, the African Union wishes to convey to the parties that our two organizations can successfully mobilize international support for the current process if the South Sudanese live up to their commitments. I made this point very clearly this morning during the 66th IGAD Council of Ministers meeting here in Addis Ababa.

In this connection, our joint mission underscored the imperative for the Government to create an environment conducive to the return of opposition groups during the pre-interim period. We therefore take note of and applaud the decision by the National Assembly to ratify the revitalized Agreement on 15 October, which paves the way for its incorporation into the transitional Constitution. We now look forward to the successful completion of the work of the National Pre-Transitional Committee aimed at, among other

things, facilitating an environment conducive to an inclusive implementation process.

The coming together of the signatories to the Agreement, including Mr. Riek Machar, during the peace celebrations on 31 October in Juba, gives further hope that the implementation may be on the right track. In this regard, we commend the leaders for making conciliatory and confidence-building statements during those celebrations. During our visit, there was concern over the status of political prisoners as well as prisoners of war. As my friend Jean-Pierre Lacroix stated, their release is a further testament to the fact that the parties are more serious about implementing the current Agreement.

Meanwhile, I wish to inform the Council that on 14 November, the African Union High-level Ad Hoc Committee for South Sudan met with the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, to exchange views on how best to support the peace process. As the Council will recall, the Ad Hoc Committee is composed of South Africa as Chair, Algeria, Chad, Nigeria and Rwanda. There was consensus that the Ad Hoc Committee should sign the revitalized Agreement as a guarantor, since it had not done so on 12 September. It was also agreed that a meeting would be convened between the Ad Hoc Committee and the IGAD Special Envoy on 19 November to exchange views on the tasks to be undertaken by the member States and the AU Commission.

The Ad Hoc Committee will use the interaction to reach a better understanding and appreciation of the implementation progress, in preparation for its planned visit to South Sudan, to be undertaken soon.

The African Union Inter-Departmental Task Force on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development undertook a mission from 7 November to 9 November to South Sudan. The aim was to ascertain the current and future needs of the African Union, with a view to enhancing its capacities to accompany the people of South Sudan in their efforts to attain lasting peace. The team has reported findings similar to those of our joint mission and has underscored the need to support this revitalized Agreement. The visit will be used to express continental support for the peace process and underscore the fact that there can be no sustainable peace unless the parties adhere to a permanent ceasefire and ensure an inclusive process. This is given the fact that those that are called on to support the peace process, including the AU and the United Nations, can offer their best assistance to the people of South Sudan only in a conflict-free environment. I should therefore like to inform the Council that the AU has been called upon to assist both the independent border commission and the Technical Boundaries Committee. In this light, the ongoing clashes are of concern to our member States.

In this regard, we also note with concern that the National Salvation Front has not yet signed the Agreement and continues to disapprove of it. All efforts should be undertaken to engage the Front on its concerns and ensure that it joins the peace process, especially by those countries that have influence on this movement.

Before I conclude, I wish to commend the United Nations Mission in South Sudan for its excellent work in protecting civilians under very challenging circumstances. The Mission should be supported in whatever way possible to ensure that it accomplishes its assigned tasks. I wish also to commend the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission and the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism, and pledge the AU's continued support to the two institutions. We call on them to provide IGAD, the AU and the United Nations with timely reports and proposals on how to proficiently support the Agreement, and our Councils should stand ready to respond appropriately.

I fully concur that the agreement provides an unparalleled opportunity for the people of South Sudan to realize lasting peace. The success of the implementation process will require considerable coordination and cooperation between our organizations and IGAD. There can be no doubt that some challenges will emerge. Therefore, we should all be prepared to address them in a swift and coordinated manner. Such coordinated approaches would help us to persuasively insist on an inclusive implementation process that ensures that the interests of all communities would be catered to, if not already accommodated in the agreement.

Last but not least, the gender dimension of the joint visit showed that, unfortunately, violence against women has not stopped, and we must devote more effort and attention to that critical issue. Let me say once again that, sooner or later, justice will be done.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Chergui for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka.

Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka: I thank you, Sir, for the opportunity to brief the Security Council today on our joint African Union (AU)-United Nations mission to South Sudan, which was the first-ever of its kind undertaken by UN-Women and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), undertaken jointly with the AU, represented by Mr. Chergui and Ms. Specioza Kazibwe of FemWise. That augurs well for reinforcing the nexus linking development, peace and security, and humanitarian assistance. In our meeting with the Government of South Sudan, that was also appreciated.

Our collaboration with DPKO is an important development, given the role that it plays in mission settings as a peacekeeper, peacemaker and protector of civilians, a considerable number of whom are women. In their own right, women are defenders of peace and are critical to invest in for the sustainability of all peace efforts. I join my colleagues in commending South Sudan on the signing of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, and I welcome the important provisions of the agreement that address women, especially the 35 per cent quota for women in the composition of the executive branch of the revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity of the Republic of South Sudan. The women truly welcomed the agreement and called for the immediate cessation of hostilities. They called on all leaders of warring factions and armed parties to communicate with their followers and inform them of the peace agreement, as the fighting had not completely subsided. They also said that the same message must be conveyed to militias and non-organized forces. They are anxious for progress and are forging ahead with reconciliation, even though among themselves, as women, they had no disputes or hostilities to resolve.

What they had in common, as they said, was that they all found themselves caught up in a man's war in which they all had been victims of sexual assault, their families were killed, and their livelihoods destroyed. They had no access to the leaders in their country, who, they said, were responsible for the crisis. They are asking us, as the United Nations and African Union, to help them ensure their contact with the leaders and that the leaders are held accountable. They believe that implementing the 35 per cent affirmative action quota is critical at all levels and within all branches of the Government, not just at the national executive level. Furthermore, women want to ensure that the constitutional review process includes them so that their needs and concerns are considered right from the start. They requested the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the AU to ensure the continuous monitoring of the inclusiveness and effectiveness of the agreement and that the monitoring process begins now with the pre-transitional structures.

We have been reviewing events in South Sudan since our mission. We are concerned that, despite the guarantees, the parties have yet to honour their commitment to ensuring women's meaningful participation in the implementation of the revitalized agreement. In particular, honouring the 35 per cent affirmative action principle has yet to take root. Of the new bodies, the National Pre-Transitional Committee now has 10 members, one of whom is a woman, amounting to 10 per cent. The National Constitution Amendment Committee has 15 members, two of whom are women. There are no women in the Independent Boundaries Commission, the Technical Boundaries Committee or the Joint Transitional Security Committee. The Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism is also expected to include 31 per cent women. None of those recently formed institutions meets the 35 per cent quota. It is important that we not fail to overlook those statistics and take appropriate corrective action.

That is where members of the Security Council come in. They can be of support. They can encourage the parties to ensure that women are included in a timely manner before it is too late. I urge IGAD and African Union colleagues to ensure that the peace agreement is also implemented in a manner that honours the commitments made.

The women also urged that they be included in security sector reform and security institutions so that those institutions can properly fulfil their role in protecting all the people of South Sudan, including women and girls. They outlined the importance of being included as women in leadership and participatory roles so that the security institutions are reconstituted in a manner that is gender-sensitive and focuses on the protection of civilians from gender-based violence, including the protection of all citizens — men and women alike. The inclusion of women is also essential for reorganized security forces, and, with the recruitment of women at a minimal level of 35 per cent into commissioned and non-commissioned cadres, to change the face of the security forces and curb negative

masculinities, prioritize gender within disarmament and demobilization, including in the organization of cantonments, and strengthen accountability for conflict-related sexual violence. South Sudanese women stand ready to meaningfully participate in bringing peace to their country. They want women in the diaspora to also play a role in South Sudan.

Women see our briefing today as an opportunity to make sure that members of the Council are aware of their appreciation of the revitalized agreement, as well as their commitment to taking their destiny into their own hands, while paying attention to the threats posed to the full implementation of the agreement. They want their keen interest to participate to also be seen as a willingness to play a constructive role in the success of the peace agreement. The women fear systematic exclusion and need to be assured that reparations will take into account what they have suffered and what they have lost, including in the aftermath of surviving sexual violence. They highlighted that it is crucial that the Transitional Justice Mechanism deter and punish sexual and gender-based violence, and called for accountability mechanisms for transitional justice, including the hybrid court for South Sudan. They also called for the participation of civil society organizations in the implementation and monitoring processes, which will ensure the inclusion of women's leadership, voice and agency. The appreciation of the women of this particular agreement was encouraging, and they see it as a real opportunity to deal with one of the most devastating conflicts in the world today, through the prism of gender equality.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and DPKO for their efforts to promote women's participation and protection under very challenging circumstances and the manner in which they are able to collaborate and cooperate with the Government of South Sudan. The women with whom we met were very grateful for the existence of the peacekeeping mission and trusted their lives to UNMISS. We also discussed issues affecting female peacekeepers and how the United Nations can attract more female peacekeepers.

That is a commendable peace agreement, and we are ready to support it in any way that we can and ensure the success of its implementation. I ask the Security Council to join us, with the team that visited South Sudan, in insisting that the parties do everything to make sure that the very important commitments are met and delivered.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Cohen (United States of America): I thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix, Commissioner Chergui and Executive Director Mlambo-Ngcuka for sharing their impressions from their October visit to South Sudan and their perspectives on recent developments in the country.

The United States appreciates the continued collaboration between the United Nations and the African Union on South Sudan, particularly the emphasis on the role of women in the ongoing peace process. We have consistently seen the marginalization of women in South Sudan in previous peace processes. It is time for the voices of women to be heard and for their contributions to be genuinely taken into account. Regarding recent developments in South Sudan, the United States, the international community and, most importantly, the South Sudanese people have started to hear encouraging rhetoric from South Sudan's leaders on some topics.

We have heard about a new era of peace and prosperity, an admission of responsibility for actions that spurred horrific violence and a promise of forgiveness across party lines. We have heard leaders commit to reconciliation and healing and pledge to include all parties in the political process, particularly civil society and women. We have also noted some progress on the deliverables of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. The National Pre-Transitional Committee is now established. Permanent ceasefire and transitional security arrangement workshops have been held, with the promise of more to follow. Some political prisoners and prisoners of war have been released.

While we acknowledge those initial steps, we cannot ignore clear evidence from the ground that runs counter to the lofty rhetoric of South Sudan's leaders. Violent conflict continues in parts of the country and Government and opposition groups continue to perpetrate atrocities against civilians. Individuals or entities who conduct those attacks against civilians or who take any action that extends or expands conflict

should be targeted with sanctions. Many political prisoners remain in custody, with no prospect of a free or fair trial or any hope of release, including Peter Biar Ajak, who was arbitrarily detained at the Juba airport in late July. We also remain deeply concerned that journalists and civil society organizations face ongoing intimidation and censure. Humanitarian workers continue to be blocked both physically and bureaucratically from delivering life-saving assistance through taxes and fees, expulsion, detainment and even physical harm.

Peace in South Sudan is possible only if its political leaders match their actions to their rhetoric and make the necessary commitments to following through on their own agreements. A key component of implementing the peace agreement is the provision of security in Juba and creating the conditions to establish the new Government. Security arrangements must be made in the open and in coordination with the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan. We commend regional actors, particularly the Sudan and Uganda, for their leadership and commitment in supporting peace in South Sudan. We are counting on them to uphold the arms embargo that is preventing the flow of weapons into South Sudan, which would destabilize the country and the region. We note the Intergovernmental Authority on Development's ongoing assessment of the feasibility of regional support to enhance security in Juba.

We underscore that any decision to reconfigure the United Nations Mission in South Sudan is the prerogative of the Security Council and must not impact the impartiality of the Mission or its current mandated tasks, which are vital to the well-being and safety of hundreds of thousands of South Sudanese. While the peace celebration held in Juba on 31 October delivered to the world images of enthusiasm and joy at the prospect of peace in South Sudan, what remains first and foremost in our minds is the reality of the conflict-induced suffering of the South Sudanese people. The United States continues to support the people of South Sudan and their aspirations to freedom, peace and prosperity. In doing so, we continue to call on the leaders of South Sudan to stop the violence, match rhetoric with tangible actions and move swiftly to implement past agreements and build on a fragile peace.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): Let me begin by thanking Under-Secretary-General Lacroix, Commissioner Chergui and UN-Women Executive Director Mlambo-Ngcuka for their comprehensive briefing. We welcome the joint visit to South Sudan that took place in October, and see it as an example of enhanced cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union, which can be instrumental to advancing the peace process in South Sudan.

I visited Juba in June in my capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan, and my observations on the humanitarian and socioeconomic situation broadly concur with the information we just received. During my visit, including in the protection-of-civilians camps, I witnessed an immense scale of human suffering and saw with my own eyes the devastating effect of the conflict in South Sudan on the civilian population, especially the most vulnerable — women and children.

The major difference between my visit and our briefers' joint field mission is the political context and the fact that, in September, South Sudanese parties signed a revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. Poland welcomes that development and sees it as a significant step in the peace process. At this point, I would like to commend the determination of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and its member States to broker a new peace agreement in South Sudan.

Two months after the singing of the new agreement, we have seen some encouraging events. The peace process, however, is still fragile, some areas of concern remain and the civilian population is yet to experience the dividends of peace. We are seriously concerned about reports of the deliberate targeting of civilians, serious human rights violations and abuses, sexual and gender-based violence, the alarming levels of food insecurity and the continued impediments to humanitarian assistance.

The immediate end of violence is a precondition to the improvement of the situation of the South Sudanese population. It is therefore critical that all parties immediately observe the provisions of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access of December 2017. We also believe that the transitional security arrangements need to be put in place without any further delay.

We are also convinced that no agreements will be durable without inclusiveness. We welcome the inclusion in the revitalized agreement of the provisions on women's representation in the pre-transition,

transitional and other decision-making bodies and institutions. We stress the importance of putting those provisions into practice. It is our strong belief that South Sudanese women can play a vital role in peacebuilding and State-building, as well as reconciliation efforts. In that context, I would like to emphasize the necessity of providing a more protective environment for women and girls in South Sudan.

The people of South Sudan want peace more than anything else, and after years of suffering they urgently deserve it. They deserve stability, food security, education for their children and State institutions that care for citizens, protect them and provide them with basic services. With the revitalized peace agreement, the leaders of South Sudan have a unique opportunity to rebuild the country. We truly believe that this time all signatories will demonstrate real commitment and determination to bring durable peace and stability to South Sudan.

Last but not least — and as always, when we discuss the issue of South Sudan in the Council — let me take this opportunity to express my country's appreciation to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) for its tireless efforts in extremely difficult circumstances. We thank UNMISS personnel and praise the Mission's role in the protection of civilians and ensuring an environment conducive to humanitarian actors to deliver their assistance.

Mr. Ipo (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes the holding of this briefing of the Security Council, focusing on the consideration of the developments in the situation in South Sudan and the extent of the challenges facing that country. We would like to thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN-Women, and Mr. Smaïl Chergui, African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, for the quality of their briefings. My delegation also welcomes the recent joint visit of their respective organizations to South Sudan.

Côte d'Ivoire follows with interest the development of the situation in South Sudan, which calls for comments on the political process, security issues and the humanitarian and human rights situation.

With regard to the political process, my delegation welcomes the efforts of the leaders of the region and all other bilateral and multilateral partners, which led to the signing of the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan on 12 September. In that regard, my country welcomes the return of Mr. Riek Machar, First Vice-President of South Sudan, to Juba on 31 October.

However, my delegation remains concerned about the difficulties with regard to the full and inclusive implementation of the revitalized Agreement, which should promote a return to peace, thereby offering the South Sudanese people the prospects for development and a decent life to which they have aspired for a little over five years.

My delegation therefore reaffirms its support for the ongoing political process. In that regard, it urges the South Sudanese parties to join the current positive regional dynamic for a return to peace and stability, with the support of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the African Union, the United Nations and other partners.

My country believes that the political process should also be extended to women, who are underrepresented in the institutions entrusted with implementing the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. Unfortunately, we note the presence of only one woman on the National Pre-transitional Committee, which monitors the implementation of the Agreement, that is, a rate of 10 per cent, which is well below the 35 per cent envisaged.

On the security front, my delegation notes with regret the acts of vandalism and the attacks against the population by certain armed groups. We therefore believe that, in order to address that troubling situation, there is a compelling need to pay particular attention to the thorny issue of the unification of the army.

Côte d'Ivoire would also like to urge the Government of South Sudan to work harder to end hostilities and to ensure the protection of civilians. It further calls on the Government of South Sudan to implement the necessary security sector reforms, at the heart of the revitalized Agreement, and to implement, in collaboration with the other South Sudanese parties, the arrangements contained in the Khartoum Declaration of Agreement between Parties of the Conflict of South Sudan.

The humanitarian and human rights situation remains equally alarming. My country notes with great concern the persistence of sexual violence, violence against children and attacks on humanitarian workers, as well as obstacles to helping those in need.

My delegation also condemns the kidnappings and the recruitment of child soldiers.

Given that situation, Côte d'Ivoire would like to reaffirm the need for the effective implementation of the principle of accountability so that the perpetrators of human rights violations are held accountable for their acts before the competent international judicial bodies. My delegation urges the South Sudanese leadership to create security conditions conducive to the provision of humanitarian assistance and to the safe and dignified return of displaced persons to their areas of origin.

In conclusion, my country believes that only the determined commitment of the South Sudanese leadership in good faith can ensure the success of the peace process and reassure international partners. In the same vein, it is necessary that the South Sudanese authorities comply with the requirement for transparency in the management of oil revenues.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Mr. Smaïl Chergui and Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka for their very enlightening briefings. I would like to mention three major issues of concern for France.

First, the difficult situation and the suffering of women in South Sudan, who remain marginalized. That was the main focus of the joint mission that the briefers conducted as part of the women and peace and security agenda. I thank them for having done that. It was essential in order to highlight that common priority. It was also an important example of the joint work of the United Nations and the African Union.

France shares the comments that the briefers made and is deeply concerned about the seriousness of the facts brought to light in the Secretary-General's report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2018/250), which highlights hundreds of cases of gang rape and genital mutilation used as weapons of war, often leaving irreparable scars. France condemns in the strongest terms those criminal acts, of which women and children, because they are the most vulnerable, are the primary victims.

We urge that the joint communiqués and commitments be fully implemented, that those responsible be identified, tried and punished, including those in the ranks of the army and that the protection of women, as well as the investigative mechanisms, be strengthened. In that regard, France calls on the South Sudanese authorities to strengthen the specialized police units by ensuring women's access to them. We support the efforts of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), UN-Women and Special Representative Pramila Patten to ensure that what has been promised on paper is translated into action and made a reality.

France hopes that the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan makes full use of the sanctions against those who commit and sponsor sexual violence. The cooperation between the Panel of Experts on South Sudan, UNMISS and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict is essential in that regard.

The situation of children is also extremely worrying. The report of the Secretary-General on that subject reminds us that since 2014, more than 600 children have been victims of sexual violence (see S/2018/865, para. 54), and those are only verified violations. The actual number is undoubtedly much higher. We must act, and we welcome the fact that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mrs. Virginia Gamba de Potgieter, has visited the field, as has the Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict, which will discuss the draft conclusions in the coming days.

The second major issue that I wish to address today is the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, signed on 12 September. It provides for the involvement of women and young people in the peace process, which is crucial and which, I hope, will guarantee its success.

The signing of the Agreement is an encouraging development, which, on behalf of France, I wish to once again commend. My country hopes that the Agreement reached will lead to a lasting and inclusive peace. That is our hope and that of millions of South Sudanese women and men who yearn for peace and a better life. We do not want peace on paper alone.

The current period is crucial for the success of the peace. Now is the time to build trust among the parties, strengthen the ceasefire, win the support of the people, and make the security and institutional arrangements necessary for the implementation of the Agreement. In that regard, we welcome the holding of the first meeting of the National Pre-transitional Committee in Khartoum on 21 and 22 October. We call on the parties to continue in that direction.

Finally, on the third issue, I would like to say a word about the humanitarian situation in South Sudan, which must continue to mobilize us. Seven million South Sudanese still need humanitarian aid and nearly half of the population is severely malnourished. The first signs of the positive impact of the peace agreement in terms of improving the food situation and humanitarian access are encouraging. It is essential that they endure over the long term. It is also crucial to do everything possible to protect humanitarian personnel, who continue to be the target of attacks, and to continue our efforts to ensure that such crimes do not go unpunished.

The Security Council can count on France's ongoing commitment with regard to such issues.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia): We thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix, Commissioner Smaïl Chergui and Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka for their respective briefings.

The African Union-United Nations joint mission to South Sudan, which took place at the beginning of October, could not have been more timely. It provided an opportunity to express support for the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan and to shed light on the remaining challenges that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

The inclusion of women in the implementation of the revitalized Agreement needs particular attention. We are encouraged by the expressed commitment of the parties to the fight against sexual and gender-based violence. The perpetrators of that crime should be held to account as a matter of urgency. We also have no doubt that the provisions of the revitalized Agreement, which stipulate the fair participation of women in the executive as well as other branches of the Government, will be implemented faithfully.

It is opportune that this meeting is taking place following today's extraordinary session of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Council of Ministers in Addis Ababa to discuss the situation in South Sudan. The implementation of the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan remains the only viable option to ensure lasting peace in South Sudan and address the current political, social, economic and security challenges facing the country. We understand the scepticism about the implementation of the revitalized agreement. However, the signing of the agreement by the majority of the parties to the conflict, as well as the positive developments that followed, clearly indicate the commitment of the parties to implement the revitalized agreement.

The fighting across the country has decreased significantly. The National Pre-transitional Committee has started its work to establish a road map for the transitional period in South Sudan. The peace celebration day event in Juba on 31 October under the theme "Celebrating the Dawn of Peace, Appreciating Friends, Cherishing Reconciliation and Unity", which took place in the presence of the leaders of countries of the region, sent a strong message to the people of South Sudan of the commitment of the parties to fully implementing the peace agreement. Countries of the region have expressed their readiness to help them in that endeavour.

The international community has a historic opportunity to end the cycle of vicious violence in South Sudan and bring about tangible results to the country's people, who have suffered for far too long. That opportunity should not be allowed to slip away simply because earlier attempts have failed to bring about the desired results. As there is no plan B, it is imperative to seize the momentum. The full support of the international community for the implementation of the peace agreement is critically important. All possible efforts should therefore be made in support of the successful completion of the pre-transitional period.

The Security Council has a particular role to play in ensuring the implementation of the revised peace agreement. IGAD has requested the support of the Council in ensuring the full deployment of the Regional Protection Force and a further review of its mandate so that it will be in a better position to support the implementation of the revised peace agreement. We hope the Council will respond positively to that request. The Chiefs of Staff of the IGAD countries have been working to assess the operational needs and the additional tasks of the Regional Protection Force in the light of the revised peace agreement and the current situation on the ground. The results of those assessments will be communicated to the Council as soon as they become available.

The support and assistance to IGAD and other parties provided so far by the African Union, the United Nations, IGAD partners and the wider international community should be extended to the implementation

of the agreement as well. Maintaining unity of purpose among IGAD, the African Union and the United Nations in the quest for lasting peace, security and stability in South Sudan still remains vital in the post-revitalization period. IGAD is resolved more than ever to ensure that the agreement is implemented. Improvements in the relations among countries of the region would add impetus to the successful implementation of the agreement.

Even though we are encouraged by the progress made so far, we would like to underscore the importance of nurturing trust among the parties for the full implementation of the revitalized agreement. More confidence-building measures should be undertaken and, in that regard, we welcome the holding of meetings in Yei and Kajo-keji between senior field commanders of the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition and the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and the agreements reached between them. Confidence-building measures of that kind should continue because without them it will be difficult to proceed to the transitional period. We would also like to highlight the urgency of implementing the pre-transitional period tasks as stipulated in the peace agreement's implementation matrix to lay the foundation for the transitional period. The longer the pre-transitional period takes, the less likely it will be to make meaningful progress. We hope the parties will stay committed to doing so.

Ensuring the further reduction of conflict and the total cessation hostilities is critically important. While it is a necessary condition for the implementation of the peace agreement, silencing the guns in South Sudan would also facilitate the delivery of much-need humanitarian assistance. The parties need to prioritize the implementation of the permanent ceasefire on cessation of hostilities, the protection of civilians and humanitarian access. The restoration of a permanent ceasefire is essential for unhindered access to the affected population and the safety of humanitarian personnel and assistance delivery.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I thank the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, the Executive Director of UN-Women and the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security for their briefings and for their visit to South Sudan from 7 to 10 October in order to closely assess the situation there.

Today I will address three issues: the transitional process, the role and empowerment of women and humanitarian concerns.

With regard to the transitional process, the signing of the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan turned a new page in the history of that country. As we reiterate our support for the peace process in all its phases and welcome the decrease in hostilities, we express our concern about some individuals who continue their violations against the security and safety of the people of South Sudan, who aspire to peace, reconciliation, justice and development.

With regard to the role and empowerment of women, lessons can be learned from war — and one of them is that women are its main victims. They are also the ones who first call for peace. Their role in negotiations, transitions and sustainable peace is important and vital. Women should not suffer from war and their role should not be disregarded in peace. According to what we have heard today and to what was stipulated in the revitalized Agreement on the quota of women, they deserve to participate more in decision-making. We look forward to the completion of legal procedures on the establishment of a hybrid court for South Sudan to implement the Peace Agreement so that justice will reign and women, men and children can enjoy justice.

With regard to humanitarian concerns, many problems continue to destabilize peace, such as the inability of approximately 4.5 million refugees and internally displaced persons to return, the fact that nearly 70 per cent of children are unable to go to school and the increase in the cost of daily living. Successfully achieving peace in South Sudan hinges upon addressing those humanitarian challenges. Any step that does not take into account the participation of women, the education of children and ending hunger will face the most difficult obstacles. Only by seriously addressing those challenges will South Sudan reap the benefits of security and stability.

Let me recall the presidential order of November 2017, which removed taxes on humanitarian workers. We encourage the Government of South Sudan to continue implementing that order. We call on parties that still hinder humanitarian work and access to assistance to stop their inhumane practices, as innocent people in need are paying the price.

In conclusion, we thank the Government of South Sudan for cooperating with the joint African Union-United Nations delegation, and we encourage it to continue its cooperation with both organizations in order to serve the interests of South Sudan and its friendly people.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix, African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security Chergui and Executive Director of UN-Women Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, for their briefings and their very active engagement in South Sudan, including in their joint visit to the country. I think that the visit serves to show the strong partnership between the African Union and the United Nations, which is very welcome.

The briefers brought to our attention the horrible and difficult situation for many women and girls in South Sudan and the need for meaningful political participation for them.

I just returned from South Sudan last week, having led a visit of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. The historic and significant developments in the Horn of Africa, triggered by the reconciliation process between Eritrea and Ethiopia, have dramatically changed the dynamics in the region and opened a new chapter of peace and cooperation. Those dynamics also provide new positive momentum for South Sudan, which needs to be built on. In that regard, I want to commend the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the facilitators for their efforts in having reached the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. The Agreement is now the only game in town. We must all weigh in to ensure its implementation.

I was in South Sudan for only three days, but the people all testified to a new atmosphere of hope for peace. The region's continued engagement in monitoring progress and holding the parties to account will be vital. The Council must continue to support their efforts. We believe that the Council should be actively engaged, and that means acknowledging progress made by the South Sudanese parties as well as pointing out where they fall short of their commitments.

What is needed now is a clear political will to implement what has been agreed upon and to engage in genuine peacebuilding and reconciliation. We welcome the steps taken so far, including the reduced levels of fighting. At the same time, we are concerned by continued reports of military clashes. A complete cessation of hostilities by all parties, the Government and armed groups alike, must be unconditional, as all of the briefers have pointed out. That is a prerequisite for a meaningful political process. There must be consequences for violations of the Agreement, including targeted measures against those who incite violence or seek to derail the peace process.

The spirit of inclusiveness must be safeguarded in the coming political process. The process will be viable only if it includes all stakeholders, in particular youth, women and civil society. In that regard, we strongly welcome the provisions for including 35 per cent women in the transitional Government, as an increase in the political representation of women is crucial for lasting peace.

Part of the way forward will also be advancing accountability and transitional justice mechanisms, including through establishing a hybrid court. The culture of impunity for crimes committed in the conflict, not least acts of sexual violence, must come to an end. Sexual and gender-based violence is now a stand-alone sanctions criterion, which should serve as a stern reminder.

We also remain strongly concerned by the continued dire humanitarian situation. Rapid, safe and unhindered delivery of relief across South Sudan must be assured. Humanitarian workers are doing admirable work and must be allowed to carry out their work safely. I have stressed the need for the Government to build trust and support all the people working on the humanitarian side. Revisiting the issue of registration fees is one of the urgent ways for the Government to move forward.

The conflict in South Sudan has had a devastating effect on the children in the country and has left deep scars in the next generation. The revitalized Peace Agreement represents an opportunity to now finally turn a corner and make the protection of children a priority. We were encouraged by the commitment to improve the situation of children affected by armed conflict expressed by our interlocutors during the visit, but action is key.

The demobilization, release and reintegration of hundreds of children in 2018 and the recent accession by the Government to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on children and armed conflict, are important positive steps. During the visit we presented recommendations to the Government

on the way forward. That included the need to work with the United Nations to expand the current action plan, which is focused on recruitment, into a comprehensive action plan that would address all grave violations against children.

Another important recommendation that we made was to continue to facilitate the release and reintegration of children as part of the implementation of the peace Agreement, and to allocate sufficient funds for the reintegration of former child soldiers. In that regard, the Security Council should also consider whether the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan should be adjusted to that new situation, including the possibility of adding a stronger emphasis on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and the capacity-building component.

We also undertook a field visit to the towns of Bor and Pibor, in the eastern parts of the country. We met with children affected by the armed conflict and visited reintegration programmes for former child soldiers. It became very clear that the reintegration of children cannot take place in a vacuum. If there are no schools or health services, then reintegration will not lead to the desired results, neither for the victims nor for society as a whole. Hopefully, the Agreement now signed will also trigger the Government, with the support of the international community, to invest in long-term development.

Protecting the children of South Sudan is our moral obligation. But it is also an investment for the future, critical to prevent conflict and sustain peace. The challenges ahead for the country are immense, and the path to peace will be very difficult. We must not be naive, but the revitalized Peace Agreement provides an opportunity that now must be seized. The Council should step up its engagement in the next few months and work closely with the region, while encouraging progress and making sure that the parties live up to their commitments. Including women and protecting children should be a priority, for all of the reasons that we heard in the briefings today.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): May I thank all of the briefers for sharing their assessment of progress in South Sudan following the visit. It is important and welcome to see such joint African Union-United Nations activity.

The signing of the revised Peace Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, in September, was a significant moment in the peace process. Let me again publicly take the opportunity to welcome that important step taken by the parties. We also applaud the role of the region. The deal would not have been agreed without the work of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and in particular by Ethiopia, the Sudan, Uganda and Kenya. We welcome their engagements in monitoring progress and holding the parties to account for implementing the Agreement. If I understood the Ethiopian Ambassador correctly, let me also welcome IGAD's intention to approach the Security Council to discuss any proposal to deploy troops to support the Agreement.

As our briefers made clear, some significant progress has been made since the revised Peace Agreement was signed, which we warmly welcome. That includes in particular the establishment of key transitional bodies, the return of Riek Machar and other opposition leaders to Juba for the Peace Day celebrations, the release of some prisoners and the holding of National Pre-transition Committee meetings, all of which is to be welcomed. I was struck by the Swedish Ambassador's comment about the tangible sense of hope that he perceived while he was there and that everything we do must be to sustain that hope.

Despite the promising start, we remain concerned that several fundamental provisions of the Agreement are yet to be implemented and the targets set out in the time frame are being missed. We are deeply concerned by the reports of continued violence, in particular around Wau and Yei, which threatens to undermine the Agreement and violate the commitments made by all parties in the cessation of hostilities, numerous ceasefire agreements and the revised Peace Agreement. We are also concerned that the United Nations Mission in South Sudan and the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism are being denied access to areas, such as south of Wau, to carry out their, including monitoring the implementation of the ceasefire as mandated by the Council and IGAD.

Secondly, we have yet to see the full and unfettered humanitarian access that has been repeatedly promised. That has been improved in some areas, but elsewhere obstructions continue, including around greater Bagari, where access was denied for several months early this year, and has recently been blocked again, and where we know there are people in famine-like conditions.

Bureaucratic obstructions also continue, including taxes and fees that divert tens of millions of dollars from providing food, water and shelter for the most vulnerable in South Sudan. We call on the Government to South Sudan to introduce a temporary waiver from income taxes for international stuff of humanitarian and development organizations, as well as a waiver from other taxes, fees and permit costs and fees for as long as the current acute humanitarian crisis continues. We call on the opposition to cease attempts to impose illegal charges. As of September, the World Food Programme assessed that 6.1 million people, over half of the population, were facing severe food insecurity. The humanitarian community is in South Sudan as a lifesaver, not a revenue raiser.

Thirdly, more must be done to ensure that the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan is supported across South Sudanese society. That includes increasing the transparency of Government revenue so that the people of South Sudan can see that it is being used for their benefit. Fundamental rights and basic freedoms must also be respected, including the freedom of expression, the opening of civic space and the release of the political detainees that are still being held. To build confidence in the peace Agreement, its implementation must be truly inclusive. We welcome the focus of the visit on women's participation. I found the words of the Executive Director of UN-Women particularly important in that regard during her briefing today. I especially noted her comments on the security institutions, the need to end gender based violence and the need to ensure the representation of women. We know that female involvement in peace processes makes them much more likely to be sustained. That is in everybody's interest.

Tackling impunity will also be essential to building confidence in the peace process and preventing future grave violations. We call on the Government of South Sudan to sign the memorandum of understanding with the African Union to establish the hybrid court to ensure perpetrators are held to account for their appalling crimes.

I want in particular to highlight our concern about the impact of the conflict in South Sudan on children. The Secretary-General's recent report on children and armed conflict (S/2018/865) finds that children have been deliberately targeted and killed, very young girls have been subjected to gruesome gang rape and children have been abducted and their schools have been destroyed. We welcome the recent visit of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, as mentioned by the Swedish Ambassador, and the work on a comprehensive action plan to address that issue. We urge the signatories of the action plans to implement them in full.

Let me conclude by repeating that we are strong supporters of the peace deal and we applaud the efforts of the region in achieving it. There has been welcome progress, but there needs to be so much more. It is essential that the parties demonstrate their commitment to the agreement by addressing all outstanding issues urgently. That is because it is the people of South Sudan who are suffering most from hunger and from violence. It is for the sake of the people that we must all redouble our efforts.

Mrs. Mele Colifa (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to thank the joint African Union-United Nations delegation that visited South Sudan for their excellent briefing. We welcome the visit made by this joint delegation, led by Smaïl Chergui, African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, and Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, who travelled to South Sudan to help underpin the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, signed in Ethiopia in September, which reflects the importance of women's participation in the peace process in South Sudan. We also thank Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN-Women, for her comprehensive briefing to the Security Council.

The Government of Equatorial Guinea is concerned about reports of persistent sexual violations in South Sudan, which is why we urge the parties to the conflict to fulfil their commitments to punish sexual violence, including by removing the perpetrators of such crimes from the armed and security forces and protecting the victims. We note the trial initiated by the Government of South Sudan against 11 soldiers accused of rape, and we urge it to continue to work in collaboration with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan to ensure accountability in responding to the needs of women and girls affected by rape.

We remind the parties of their obligation to create an environment in which women and girls are not threatened and can go about their lives in an

environment where they are not so easily sexually abused. The Council must make it a priority to find a definitive solution to the situation.

We believe that the participation of women in the political process in South Sudan is indispensable because when women intervene in the resolution of a conflict, they help to keep the family together and contribute their work to the solution of educational, social and economic development problems. Consequently, the duty of women in South Sudan is to be present in the endorsement, implementation and verification of the final agreements to put an end to the conflict. It is said that to properly educate a woman means to properly educate a society.

Equatorial Guinea unequivocally deplores sexual violence in armed conflict and in times of peace, as well as the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. We believe that it is one of the worst attacks on human dignity and we share the deep concern that everyone in the Council feels about the growing trend of those unacceptable acts in the world. We would like to highlight the exceptional work of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict network, the appointment of a Victims' Rights Advocate and the commitment to zero-tolerance of that type of abuse.

Equatorial Guinea would like to call on the parties involved in conflicts to commit themselves to ensuring the protection of civilians, in accordance with international humanitarian law — always taking into account the primary responsibility of national Governments in that regard, respecting the sovereignty of countries and supporting their efforts in the implementation of the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

We cannot isolate violence, including sexual violence, from the root causes of conflict. Peace cannot be achieved without investing in the sustainable development of countries and in gender equality. That is the most effective conflict prevention strategy. In that regard, we would like to acknowledge the aspirations of the African Union Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including their clear focus on people-driven sustainable development, anchored in gender equality, women's empowerment and equitable economic growth between countries and within countries.

We would also like to acknowledge the collaborative framework and the commitment of the African Union and the United Nations to the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda and to the fight against sexual violence in armed conflicts, the impunity of the perpetrators of such atrocities and accountability for the crimes.

Equatorial Guinea reaffirms the key role of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), resolution 1820 (2008) and other related resolutions in ensuring the participation and empowerment of women in conflicts and promoting actions to prevent sexual violence in such situations.

In conclusion, in conflict situations and in international responses to them, Equatorial Guinea would like to recommend the coordinated implementation of good practices in the training of all contingents recruited in predeployment preparations by the organizations in charge of coordinating peacebuilding missions, through the integration of a gender perspective and rigorous training on sexual exploitation and abuse. We also recommend ongoing support for the various elements of the United Nations architecture for combating sexual violence in armed conflict and for their collaboration with United Nations agencies responsible for counter-terrorism, organized crime, humanitarian response and sustainable development, with a view to ensuring the recovery and reintegration of victims, especially children born of sexual violence and women who have survived such indignities.

Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren (Netherlands): On behalf of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, I would like to start by thanking all three briefers for the valuable joint visit to South Sudan last month, and for their briefings today in the Council. I would like to also thank them for emphasizing the need for tangible action to ensure the meaningful participation of women in the political process and in future security arrangements. In the light of that, I want to reiterate that the women of South Sudan should be at the centre of all of our efforts. It is they who suffer most from the ongoing brutal and widespread fighting. It is they who dared to call for peace long before their political leaders were willing to listen. Today I would like to make three points on the following topics in support of the women of South Sudan — the implementation of the revitalized peace Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, accountability, and unhindered access for the

United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) and humanitarian actors.

My first point concerns the implementation of the peace Agreement, whose signing we welcome, and we thank the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the African Union for its leadership in that regard. We also welcome the ratification of the Agreement by South Sudan's National Assembly. We are nonetheless concerned about reports of ongoing fighting in Wau, Yei and Unity states. The full implementation of the peace Agreement, and success in silencing the guns in South Sudan, constitutes the only way forward. However, successful implementation will require women's full and meaningful participation, as they offer a vital perspective in the analysis of conflict. It is also they who show leadership in building bridges between opposing factions. Their full and meaningful participation increases the inclusiveness, transparency and sustainability of peace processes. That is why the Kingdom of the Netherlands strongly welcomes the 35 per cent quota for women's participation in the South Sudan Agreement and would like to encourage all parties to meet the quota and ensure the meaningful participation of women in all instruments and processes related to the peace Agreement.

That brings me to my second point, the need for accountability. The Kingdom of the Netherlands underlines the importance of chapter V of the peace Agreement, which deals with accountability and transitional justice. There can be no sustainable peace if impunity persists. That clearly also applies to sexual violence in conflict. As we highlighted during the Arria Formula meeting of 22 October, we must move from a culture of impunity to a culture of deterrence. That is why we remind all parties in South Sudan that the Security Council has the ability to sanction perpetrators of sexual violence. However, sanctions can never be a substitute for full accountability, which is why we echo the call by the African Union Peace and Security Council on 10 October for the signing of the memorandum of understanding on establishing a hybrid court. We also welcome the signing of a joint communiqué on the prevention of sexual violence by the Government of South Sudan, and call for its full implementation. Ensuring justice is essential for reconciliation and for paving the way for sustainable peace.

My third point concerns the need for unhindered access for UNMISS and humanitarian actors. UNMISS personnel risk their lives on a daily basis to provide security to civilians throughout South Sudan. We urge UNMISS to continue to strengthen its forward-leaning posture in order to protect civilians from physical violence, including sexual violence. We regret that we continue to see reports of violations of the status-of-forces agreement, and again urge the Government of South Sudan to ensure full freedom of movement for UNMISS. We also urge full and unhindered access for humanitarian workers, as they are providing essential support to the population. The peace Agreement provides an opportunity to strengthen the people's resilience. That especially helps women and children, and with them, the future of South Sudan. Humanitarian actors are on the front line of those efforts, sometimes paying the highest price.

In conclusion, there is light at the end of the tunnel. The signing of the peace Agreement represents a historic step, but the work is not done. In fact, it has just started. Let us work together to ensure that this light shines for all the people of South Sudan and that women play a decisive role in shaping the future.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Mr. Smaïl Chergui, the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, and Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN-Women, for their detailed information about their joint visit to South Sudan.

The Russian Federation has consistently held the view that the situation of women, like that of the country's entire civilian population, will significantly improve as the South Sudanese peace process advances. The key to stabilizing the Republic of South Sudan lies in a sustainable ceasefire and the start of an inclusive national reconciliation process. In that regard, we attach great importance to the signing by the parties on 12 September of the revitalized peace Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. Needless to say, the agreements reached will still require a significant clarification of the details, but that makes them no less important. The main thing is that the South Sudanese parties have shown their willingness to reach a compromise and their desire to settle their existing disputes by peaceful means.

I would like to once again pay tribute to the coordinated mediation efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which made it possible to reach a successful conclusion to the

revitalization process for South Sudan's peace Agreement. The countries of the region have essentially achieved the impossible by restarting the negotiation process from scratch and for more than a year patiently helping the parties to find points of convergence. IGAD kept the initiative to revitalize the Agreement moving forward even when many of us had lost hope.

We note that today the parties in the region continue to demonstrate the same united approach to the settlement in South Sudan as before, which is extremely important for further support to the peace process. Considering the South Sudanese people's sentiments and their increasing hopes for peace and welfare that the Ambassador of Sweden shared with us, we would like to urge all our Security Council colleagues to genuinely and practically continue to support the Sudanese peace process and the relevant efforts of regional organizations.

We also welcome the desire of the guarantors of the Agreement to assist with the implementation of the peace Agreement by providing national troops from the Sudan, Uganda, Djibouti and Somalia to the Regional Protection Force. That represents a practical embodiment of the principle of African solutions to African problems, as well as an opportunity for effective cooperation between the United Nations, the Security Council and regional organizations. We are aware of the regular contacts between the General Chiefs of Staff of the IGAD countries on issues relating to the implementation of the Agreement, and we are ready to consider substantive proposals for the organization of the Regional Protection Force.

We have noted the first efforts of the South Sudanese to implement the revitalized Agreement, and we urge the country's politicians to demonstrate goodwill in ensuring full compliance with its provisions. Ultimately, the welfare of ordinary South Sudanese depends on them.

We realize that the timetables agreed on by the parties are fairly ambitious, but the fact is that only complete and comprehensive fulfilment of their commitments will help to foster mutual trust among the parties and spare them a recurrence of the mistakes made in the efforts to achieve a South Sudanese settlement in the past.

Mrs. Cordova Soria (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the Chinese presidency for convening this timely meeting. We are also grateful to Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and Mr. Smaïl Chergui for their briefings.

The signing of the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan is a fundamental step towards peace in that country. It has enabled us to reach an encouraging moment that is reflected in fewer confrontations and the willingness of the parties to demonstrate their commitment to the political process. We want to highlight the presence of Mr. Riek Machar and President Salva Kiir standing together in Juba on 31 October at the celebration of the signing of the Agreement, and we must continue to build trust between the parties in order to achieve a lasting peace.

All of our efforts should be geared to the implementation of the Agreement, which will enable us to build a sustainable peace. That will not be possible without the active participation of women. In that regard, we welcome the initiative of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UN-Women and the African Union in making a joint visit to the field and focusing specifically on the urgency of promoting the presence and participation of women in the implementation of the Agreement.

Throughout its almost two years as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, Bolivia has emphasized the importance of building an inclusive peace process in South Sudan, and we see the efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) as also having been directed at that goal. With specific regard to women's participation, we stress that the Agreement provides that both in the pre-transition phase and during the transition itself, the Council of Ministers and other decision-making bodies and institutions must guarantee a quota of at least 35 per cent for women's representation. Progress has been made in that regard, but the parties will have to work even harder to attain at least that percentage.

We want to point out that the Secretary-General's message during the open debate on women and peace and security in October (see S/PV.8382) focused on the importance of inclusive peace processes and how women's active participation is directly linked to a more sustainable peace. There are various goals that should be prioritized during this stage and the next in order to promote the agenda on women and peace and security, the drive to achieve gender parity in field operations, the participation of women at all stages

of peace processes — in decision-making roles rather than merely limited to advisory functions — and the implementation of a peace and security approach based on gender, among other things. This is a good moment in South Sudan to promote the implementation of those objectives, along with the importance of creating a protective environment for women, combating sexual violence and developing transitional justice to ensure accountability, among other things, for which the establishment of a hybrid court under the leadership of the African Union will be crucial.

While we commend the progress made in the political arena, South Sudan continues to present major challenges on the security, humanitarian and economic fronts. Consolidating the political process is the only way to address the root causes of the conflict, and the Agreement is a promising step forward in that regard. We highlight the commitment that the Government and opposition have shown in signing it, and we encourage them to continue along that path. The proper implementation of the Agreement requires even greater commitment and stronger political will on the part of all of the parties involved. The ongoing collaboration of the Transitional Government and the opposition with the countries of the region and the United Nations should therefore be further strengthened at this stage.

Secondly — and we should emphasize this point — the cooperation of the international community is essential to mobilizing the political and financial resources needed to help implement the Agreement. Thirdly, it is very important to ensure that the Security Council stays united and works together with the African Union and IGAD, especially in restoring trust with the parties. We must therefore maintain a neutral and constructive position, and for that it is vital that we coordinate our actions with those of the wider region. It is also crucial that the parties ensure an optimal operating environment for the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and for humanitarian workers, in accordance with international law and international humanitarian law.

In conclusion, we reiterate our gratitude to the countries of the region for the leadership that they have demonstrated, which has enabled significant progress to be made in the political process. We also thank UNMISS, UN-Women and the African Union for raising this timely issue and for their commitment to the political process in South Sudan.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the convening of this meeting and for the important briefings by Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and Mr. Smaïl Chergui following the joint African Union-United Nations visit to South Sudan in October.

Peru has been monitoring the peace and reconciliation process in South Sudan with high expectations and stresses the importance of the Council's continuing support to the people of South Sudan at this crucial time. We believe that the implementation of the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan will be a complex process, requiring the sustained political commitment of the parties and the support of South Sudan's citizens, the international community and the relevant regional and subregional organizations.

In our view, confidence-building is of major importance, through concrete measures such as full compliance with the cessation of hostilities, unhindered access for humanitarian aid throughout the country, the release of political prisoners and full accountability for the atrocity crimes that have been committed. We underscore the need to improve the security situation following the completion of the various transitional agreements, as well as to form a transitional Government of national unity within the established time frame. We also emphasize the importance of concerted action by the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the United Nations in reconfiguring the Regional Protection Force.

We want to highlight the fact that the visit by the senior officials who are here with us today focused on the empowerment and participation of women. Women have been the main victims of the conflict and their voices have not truly been heard. Now they are called on to play a key role in the peace process, as well as in security-sector reform. The evidence has shown that greater participation by women at every level of social and political life tends to produce more effective conflict resolution and consolidation of peace. Women provide perspectives on the future and on unity that are essential to building and sustaining peace. We emphasize in that regard the importance of complying with the 35 per cent quota established for women's representation throughout the pre-transition and transition phases in the Council of Ministers and other Government bodies and institutions where political decisions are made. That will undoubtedly enable more

effective progress to be made in tackling gender-based sexual violence. We consider it essential to develop the necessary capacities for ensuring that South Sudan's many victims get the comprehensive care they need.

We also believe it essential to guarantee access to justice. The recent convictions of 10 soldiers accused of murder and rape in 2016 must set a precedent whereby crimes and their perpetrators, direct or indirect, are duly investigated, prosecuted and punished. We hope that the peace process will enable a more effective response to the current humanitarian situation, particularly with regard to the acute food insecurity of almost 60 per cent of the population, which requires innovative mechanisms to address the serious situation, such as rapid joint responses that combine support for emergency food production and food assistance.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate how important it is that the Council remain united in providing the political support and follow-up required to continue making progress on the South Sudanese peace process, as well as working in close coordination with the African Union and IGAD, which have been fundamental to the progress that has been made.

Mr. Temenov (Kazakhstan): We thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix; African Union (AU) Commissioner Smaïl Chergui; and UN-Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka for their comprehensive briefings on their joint visit to South Sudan.

The delegation of Kazakhstan commends them for their efforts to promote to promote the meaningful participation of women in the peace process and congratulates them on the successful first-ever joint trip to South Sudan. We also thank the Government of South Sudan for facilitating this visit. We welcome the increased collaboration between the United Nations and the African Union, as well as between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and UN-Women, aimed at enhancing the women and peace and security agenda as an important tool for conflict prevention and resolution in South Sudan.

The signing of the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan on 12 September was a significant step towards peace in the country. We highly commend the concerted work of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the AU and the United Nations, as well as the mediation efforts of Ethiopia, the Sudan and Uganda, which helped to secure the peace deal. This is a good example of the cherished notion of African solutions to African problems. We have high expectations that this historic agreement, signed after five years of fighting, will lay the foundations for durable peace and stability in the country and finally put an end to the human suffering.

However, it is deeply worrying that the humanitarian and human rights situation in South Sudan remains very difficult. Civilians, especially women and children, continue to bear the brunt of the crisis, suffering violence and displacement. Food insecurity is at a critical level. The hostilities between the Government and the opposition, as well as violations of the status-of-forces agreement, persist. The latter relate in particular to restrictions on movement, interference with the implementation of mandated tasks for the protection of civilians, and the monitoring and investigating of human rights.

We thus call on all parties in South Sudan to demonstrate genuine political will to implement the Agreement, stop the ongoing violence by bringing their forces under control and strictly comply with international humanitarian law. The parties need to implement a permanent cessation of hostilities and take all appropriate measures to ensure the safety, security and freedom of movement of the personnel of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

The Council, in turn, needs to remain united in supporting the parties in South Sudan, UNMISS, IGAD and the AU in implementing the provisions of the Agreement. The international community should also make every effort to build trust and confidence between the parties and provide adequate and sustained funding for humanitarian assistance, peacebuilding and economic development.

Women and young people play an important role in implementing the Agreement. It is therefore critical to build women's capacity, improve their access to the country's political leadership and, most of all, empower them to be engaged in early-warning, mediation and confidence-building processes among local populations.

True progress on women's empowerment in South Sudan, as in many other countries, requires a total social transformation involving the State, the judiciary and the educational system, grass-roots communities, religious leaders and civil society. It is evident that lack of access to high-quality, inclusive education is the

main obstacle to achieving women's empowerment in South Sudan. Efforts must also be made to strengthen women's economic security and promote their economic empowerment. Adequate and sustainable financing aimed at ensuring that UNMISS has sufficient gender expertise, authority and capacity is equally important.

To conclude, Kazakhstan pledges its unfailing support to efforts aimed at achieving peace and stability in South Sudan and reaffirms the special contribution of women to making it a reality.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of China.

I thank Mr. Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; Mr. Chergui, Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union (AU); and Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN-Women, for their briefings.

I welcome the United Nations-African Union joint visit, which will be helpful in tackling African regional hotspot issues through United Nations-AU cooperation.

Progress has been made recently in terms of the implementation of the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. China welcomes these developments. However, there is a still a long way to go in achieving durable peace and stability. The international community and the Security Council must fully recognize the complexity of the issues involving South Sudan and provide constructive help in tackling the difficulties it is currently facing.

I wish to stress the following two points.

First, it is important to fully respect South Sudan's leadership in managing its domestic affairs, while encouraging the South Sudanese Government to be more proactive in terms of initiatives. The international community should provide assistance that is in line with the needs of the Government and the people so as to avoid imposing a solution.

Secondly, it is important to continue to support the good offices of the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). The focus should be on ensuring that the parties effectively honour their commitments, achieve a complete cessation of violence, gradually implement the various provisions of the Agreement and facilitate confidence-building among political parties.

Women are a major force in the maintenance of international peace and security. China believes that the South Sudanese Government should play a major role in the implementation of the revitalized Agreement and supports it in its efforts to provide full protection for the rights of women and children.

The implementation of the revitalized Agreement will be a lengthy process. As a country ravaged by protracted conflict, South Sudan has seen setbacks in its economic and social development, leading to substandard living conditions in many parts of the country. In addition, the conflict has created large numbers of internally displaced persons. These issues, if not dealt with in a timely fashion, will affect peace and stability in the country. The international community must therefore ramp up its humanitarian assistance and economic support to the country, and, in conjunction with promoting the peace process, help the South Sudanese Government with its national reconstruction and enhance its development capacity. The focus should be on agriculture, energy, infrastructure, education and health.

At the same time, attention should be paid to the full participation of women and young people. China commends the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) for the important contribution that it has made in maintaining peace and stability in South Sudan and supports the Mission in its efforts to continue to discharge its functions in line with the Council's Mandate, so as to provide support to the political process in the country.

China supports peace and development in South Sudan, and, under our commitment made at the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, we recently provided RMB 300 million in aid to the South Sudanese Government and RMB 100 million in emergency humanitarian food assistance. In order to help improve medical care, in particular to enhance the level of service to women, we provided assistance in the construction of the Juba teaching hospital and the Rumbek women's hospital.

China will, as always, actively support and constructively participate in the peace process in South Sudan and play a constructive role in the realization of durable peace and sustainable development in the country.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of South Sudan.

Mr. Malwal (South Sudan): Mr. President, allow me to express our delight at reporting to you under your presidency for the second time. My delegation also would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Commissioner Chergui and Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN-Women, for their presentations and their recent and timely visit to South Sudan.

My delegation would like also to thank the Permanent Representative of Sweden for leading the delegation of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to South Sudan recently.

As the Security Council knows, in Addis Ababa on 12 September, South Sudanese political leaders signed the revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. The long-awaited Agreement was the culmination of efforts by the leaders of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed of Ethiopia, President Omer Al-Bashir of the Sudan and President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, who were its brokers. The Government of the Republic of South Sudan is grateful to them, the region, the African Union (AU), the United Nations and the international community.

While we appreciate the Security Council's concerns, we would like to remind members that we are at the pre-implementation stage of the Agreement. The role and participation of women are enshrined in the Agreement and will be enhanced when we implement it.

As the Council meets today to discuss issues regarding South Sudan, I want to point out that a time of peace in South Sudan has arrived. The people of South Sudan are excited that the Government and the opposition leaders have signed the revitalized Agreement. I would like to reassure the Council by recalling the statement that our President made on 15 September in which he pledged that the Government would implement the Agreement in good faith and appealed for forgiveness and reconciliation among the people of South Sudan. We are indeed hopeful that the peace Agreement will unite the people of South Sudan as a result.

Since the peace celebration ceremony held on 31 October in Juba, which was attended by South Sudanese opposition leaders, regional and African leaders and representatives from the international community, confidence-building elements have already been visible to the people of South Sudan. Although it was behind schedule, the Parliament has ratified the revitalized peace Agreement, political detainees have been pardoned and freed and the National Pre-transitional Committee has been meeting in Juba and Khartoum. Most reassuring of all, however, is that several opposition delegations have visited Juba and been met by President Salva Kiir Mayardit over the past several days.

Those are all reassuring signs that most of the stakeholders are determined to make the peace Agreement work. Moreover, contrary to what most observers believed at the beginning, the national dialogue has been holding public discussions around the country in an environment of transparency and openness that many thought would not be possible a few months ago. What is most encouraging is that some opposition parties have been considering how best to join the national dialogue process, especially when the latter has been considering issues of the utmost concern to the opposition.

In conclusion, we would like to thank those who provided us with words of encouragement and comments during the process of implementation. We urge the Council to join the Secretary-General, the AU and IGAD in the endeavour of making sustainable peace a reality in South Sudan.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.